

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 17, 2007

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) will hold the second of two hearings on Iraq on **Sept. 19 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 138**

. The hearing will bring together State Department, United Nations and NGO experts on refugees and possible U.S. policy responses, as well as two prominent academic specialists addressing the impact of sectarian violence.

Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR)

is expected to participate

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Specific questions to be addressed include:

- What steps should the U.S. government consider when addressing the human rights and religious freedom challenges posed by intra-Muslim sectarian violence?
- To what extent is the government of Iraq tolerating sectarian violence and other religious freedom violations?
- What are the current conditions for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons and what policies should the United States consider in addressing the crisis?

Witnesses are:

Assistant Secretary of State Ellen R. Sauerbrey, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' Assistant High Commissioner for Operations

Dr. Judith Yaphe, a specialist in Middle Eastern political analysis at the National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS)

Dr. Kenneth Katzman, a specialist in Middle East affairs for the Congressional Research Service, with special emphasis on Iran and Iraq

Dana Graber, Iraq Specialist, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Michael Cromartie

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